

Hobbies

Franklin half dollars are prize investments

By Roger Boye

Franklin half dollars in "gem uncirculated" condition won the coin investment "sweepstakes" in 1987, spurting 70 percent in value, according to a survey by hobby newspaper Coin World.

Other big price gainers last year included certain 19th Century U.S. nickels in gem uncirculated condition and the so-called

"Mercury dimes" made from 1916 to 1945, also in gem uncirculated.

Overall, the rare-coin market advanced 2.21 percent in value during 1987, said Keith M. Zaner, editor of the newspaper's Trends section. In compiling that number, Coin World tracked retail prices of hundreds of U.S. coins in several condition categories.

Rarities in the gem uncircu-

lated category gained an average of 13 percent in value, but coins in the more common "typical uncirculated" or "choice uncirculated" grades registered price losses of from 3 to 4 percent last year versus 1986, according to Coin World.

Franklin half dollars—minted from 1948 until 1963—went up the most last year in part because of their popularity with collectors, Zaner said recently.